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ABSTRACT

This book examines the lives of representative White, Black, and American Indian women on the Oklahoma frontier after the abrupt opening of Indian Territory to non-Indian settlement in 1889. Drawing on primary sources, particularly diaries and letters, it focuses on the intersection of race, gender, class, and culture in the relationships among women in a rapidly changing multicultural environment. The first two chapters discuss the context of the opening of Indian Territory, and contrast stereotypes of the first female settlers with women's true experiences on the trail, during the "land rush," and establishing homesteads. Chapter 3, "New Friends and Neighbors," discusses the complex social relationships among rural White, Black, and Indian women and how children and the universal concerns of child rearing bound women together across racial lines. Chapter 4, "Educating the Cherokee Elite," describes the acculturation of the Cherokees during the 19th century and the Cherokee Nations's establishment of male and female seminaries providing high-quality education based in White culture. Chapter 5, "Christianity for the Kiowas," examines Kiowa resistance to acculturation and how missionary Isabel Crawford brought her religion, culture, and education to Kiowa women. Chapter 6, "Lifting As We Climb," explores how Black pioneer women in all-Black communities assumed leadership roles in politics, education, and community development. The final chapters discuss women's success in state and local politics and journalism and their advocacy of women's suffrage, free public education, American Indian education, and child welfare. Contains references in notes, an extensive bibliography, photographs, and an index. (SV)

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